

O Sleepless Nights in Purgatory

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Summary: There were rumors, they knew. They didn't care. They were damaged and they were broken, but when they were together, the pain seemed a little less sharp. (not incest)

O Sleepless Nights in Purgatory

****Disclaimer:**** Not mine. Never was, nor will be mine.
Sadly.

****Rating/Warnings:**** K+ / References to canonical trauma

****Time frame:**** between Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi

****Notes:**** This was ****_not_**** intended as incest. Just so y'all are aware.

I hope you enjoy!

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><p>O Sleepless Nights in Purgatory

The first time Luke crawls into her bed, drenched in cold sweat and shaking nearly as hard as she is from the lingering throes of his dark dreams, he is sure to say her name. "Leia!" he calls, and his voice is like a shining beacon, a ray of quicksilver moonlight on a cloudy night. Then he reaches for her, touching her shoulder, grabbing her wrist as her hand flies out in a wild, pointless, powerless flail, palm pointed toward him with fingers splayed, as if to push him with the air of her movement. "Leia," Luke says again, softer. And then he crawls under the sweat-soaked sheets, the memory of shrill, terrified, furious screams still echoing in his ears. He pulls the trembling princess into his arms, and she turns to bury her face in his chest.

They do not sleep for the rest of the night. They simply lay there, together, two halves of an infinite whole.

Luke pretends that he does not hear the choked, ragged sobs muffled by his shirt, or the way Leia's entire body shakes for nearly an hour. Leia pretends not to notice the way Luke will, every so often, pull his right, prosthetic arm away from the tight, protective circle holding her close, and flex the synthetic fingers with sickening, almost obsessive care.

(Both pretend not to hear the intangible whispers at the base of their thoughts, the dying echoes of the voice with which Luke called Leia back to Bespin.

Neither of them dare to think that maybe, just maybe, those whispers are not dying echoes, but a newborn's first cries.)

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If the nights are cruel and lonely, the kingdom and lair of demons, then the days are desolate, barren wastelands. Luke is no stranger to the desert—he was not born of the desert but he was raised of the desert, and Aunt Beru had always said he had the desert's bloodsong in his veins—but even he finds that nothing could have prepared him for the despair, or the exhaustion, or the fear brought by this new wilderness.

There is much to do, and far, far too little time to do it. Every day more ships arrive at the fleet-stragglers still limping in from Hoth, reinforcements from other, smaller bases, refugees, smugglers, suppliers. But it is the newcomers who catch Luke's attention, through all of the hustle and frantic bustle—the new recruits, some of them no older than sixteen or seventeen standard years. They are so full of bright passion and crystal-clear ideals, that to look at them makes Luke's chest ache.

I was one of them, once, he realizes while watching Wedge drill a new squad of potential X-Wing pilots. And look where it got me.

For the first time, Luke wonders if Han, all those many years ago, had it in the right.

("I look after just one person. Me.")

(And look where caring about someone got him.)

-x-

Two nights later, Luke jolts awake to see Leia leaning over him, eyes haunting pools of shadow in a whitepale face, which almost seems to glow in the badly illuminated light of his small officer's bunk. "Easy, Luke," he only belatedly hears her saying. "I'm not going to hurt you. Easy..."

It is only then that Luke feels the weight of the blaster in his hand, and sees the flash of dark metal pressed against Leia's chest. He recoils, jerking the blaster away from Leia, then dropping it to the floor where it—where he—cannot even threaten her again. He

collapses, shuddering, his numbed mind only halfway registering what nearly happenedâ€”what he nearly had done.

He expects Leia to leave. He promises himself he won't be hurt by it. Reminds himself that she has every right to flee.

Then there are fingers in his hair, gently smoothing the sweaty strands away from his forehead. The hand vanishes for a few seconds, and the quiet rustle of movement at the edge of the bed tells Luke that Leia is standing.

("Please, don't go,"_ he wants to plead. "_I'm sorry_.")

("It won't happen again,"_ he wants to promise. "_I would never hurt you."_)

("I don't think I can face the darkness alone,"_ he nearly says.)

Luke closes his eyes, and is silent.

Then the thin mattress sinks, and before Luke can put together what that must mean, Leia is curling up against his side. She does not speak, but she reaches for his handâ€”which he gives willingly, allowing her to thread her fingers through his, as if they are nothing more than children at play in the dusty streets.

(This time they do sleep, and though it is not quite content, and not nearly close to peaceful, for the first time since Bespin is no darkness.)

(And if they wake with their hands still clasped tightly togetherâ€”Leia's right in Luke's leftâ€”well...that is another thing they pretend not to notice.)

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Luke worries about Leia. He knows he is not the only one.

After Alderaan, she was cold. She hid her pain and hid her pain well, behind a wall of iron and duty and ice so thick that Luke still wonders it ever came down. She was distant, and regal, and beautiful in her silent suffering, noble in her invisible tears.

But now... Now, Leia is anything but cold. She is fire and brimstone. She is hollow eyes filled with a burning rage that is at once beautiful in its wild abandon, and terrifying in its wild wrath. She is acid words, and twice-formed curses. She is pain-but this time it is dry, and hot, and as desolate as the desert wastes that Luke once knew.

(He thinks, sometimes, that Aunt Beru would say she had the desert's bloodsong in her veins too. "_You can see it in the eyes,"_his aunt had told him once, smoothing down his wayward bangs as she tucked him into bed. "_The song, when it burns, looks like a sparkâ€”a spark that burns with the heat of the desert suns. But the song,"_ she had told him,_ "lives in the heart, and in the blood. It's like a sandstormâ€”wild, and fierce, and with a howl like a thousand krayt dragons. But underneath that it is fire, and it is fire that stirs up the storm, fire that makes the blood burn."_)

(Sometimes, Luke fears Leia is too much fire.)

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There are rumors.

Luke knows this.

Luke knows Leia knows this.

Neither of them care.

(No one else could understand the way Luke feels safe when Leia is with him, as if she is a wall against the darkness of despair that threatens to crush him. No one else could understand the way she seems to fit against him perfectly, like a long-lost piece of his own soul finding its way back home. No one else could understand how it is as if, when Leia takes his hand in hersâ€"his left in her rightâ€"for a few minutes the world seems to make sense again, as if the off-kilted tilt it has taken since Bespin is righted when he is in her presence.)

(They do not speak of it, but Luke thinks Leia must feel the same way. Because when he is with her, her words soften, almost imperceptibly. When she is with him, he thinks the fire consuming her dims, just a littleâ€"just enough so that it will not burn him. Thus, it does not burn her quite so much.)

(But no one else could understand that.

So neither of them try to explain.)

* * *

><p>Note II: Thoughts? Emotions? Anything at all? I'd love to hear from you!

End
file.